

# Order

**Michigan Supreme Court  
Lansing, Michigan**

February 10, 2006

Clifford W. Taylor,  
Chief Justice

ADM File No. 2005-02

Michael F. Cavanagh  
Elizabeth A. Weaver  
Marilyn Kelly  
Maura D. Corrigan  
Robert P. Young, Jr.  
Stephen J. Markman,  
Justices

Administrative Order No. 2006-2  
Privacy Policy and Access to Court Records

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The Social Security Number Privacy Act, 2004 PA 454, requires all persons who, in the ordinary course of business, obtain one or more social security numbers, to create a privacy policy in order to ensure the confidentiality of social security numbers, prohibit unlawful disclosure of such numbers, limit access to information or documents containing social security numbers, provide for proper disposal of documents containing social security numbers, and establish penalties for violation of the privacy policy.

The management of documents within court files is the responsibility of the judiciary. In the regular course of business, courts are charged with the duty to maintain information contained within public documents that is itself non-public, based upon statute, court rule, or court order. In carrying out its responsibility to maintain these documents, the judiciary must balance the need for openness with the delicate issue of personal privacy. In an effort to prevent the illegal or unethical use of information found within court files, the following privacy policy is provided for all court records, effective March 1, 2006, and to be implemented prospectively.

Accordingly, on order of the Court,

- A. The State Court Administrative Office is directed to assist trial courts in implementing this privacy policy and to update case file management standards established pursuant to this order.
- B. Trial courts are directed to:
  - 1. limit the collection and use of a social security number for party and court file identification purposes on cases filed on or after March 1, 2006, to the last 4 digits;
  - 2. implement updated case file management standards for nonpublic records;

3. eliminate the collection of social security numbers for purposes other than those required or allowed by statute, court rule, court order, or collection activity when it is required for purposes of identification;
4. establish minimum penalties for court employees and custodians of the records who breach this privacy policy; and
5. cooperate with the State Court Administrative Office in implementing the privacy policy established pursuant to this order.

On further order of the Court, the following policies for access to court records are established.

### **ACCESS TO PUBLIC COURT RECORDS**

Access to court records is governed by MCR 8.119 and the Case File Management Standards.

### **ACCESS TO NONPUBLIC RECORDS**

1. Maintenance of nonpublic records is governed by the NonPublic and Limited Access Court Records Chart and the Case File Management Standards.
2. The parties to a case are allowed to view nonpublic records within their court file unless otherwise provided by statute or court rule.
3. If a request is made by a member of the public to inspect or copy a nonpublic record or a record that does not exist, court staff shall state, "No public record exists."

### **SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS AND NONPUBLIC RECORDS**

1. The clerk of the court shall be allowed to maintain public files containing social security numbers on documents filed with the clerk subject to the requirements in this section.
2. No person shall file a document with the court that contains another person's social security number except when the number is required or allowed by statute, court rule, court order, or for purposes of collection activity when it is required for identification. A person who files a document with the court in violation of this directive is

subject to punishment for contempt and is liable for costs and attorney fees related to protection of the social security number.

3. A person whose social security number is contained in a document filed with the clerk on or after March 1, 2006, may file a motion asking the court to direct the clerk to:
  - a. redact the number on any document that does not require or allow a social security number pursuant to statute, court rule, court order, or for purposes of collection activity when it is required for identification; or
  - b. file a document that requires or allows a social security number pursuant to statute, court rule, court order, or for purposes of collection activity when it is required for identification, in a separate nonpublic file.

The clerk shall comply with the court's order and file the request in the court file.

4. Dissemination of social security numbers is restricted to the purposes for which they were collected and for which their use is authorized by federal or state law. Upon receiving a request for copies of a public document filed on or after March 1, 2006, that contains a social security number pursuant to statute, court rule, court order, or for purposes of collection activity when it is required for identification, a court shall provide a copy of the document after redacting all social security numbers on the copy. This requirement does not apply to requests for certified copies or true copies when required by law or for requests to view or inspect files. This requirement does not apply to those uses for which the social security number was provided.

### **RETENTION AND DISPOSAL OF NONPUBLIC RECORDS**

Retention and disposal of nonpublic records and information shall be governed by General Schedule 16 and the Michigan Trial Court Case File Management Standards.



I, Corbin R. Davis, Clerk of the Michigan Supreme Court, certify that the foregoing is a true and complete copy of the order entered at the direction of the Court.

February 10, 2006

*Corbin R. Davis*  
Clerk